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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

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A-36 NO. CONFIDENTIAL HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

1963 NOV 2 AM 11 08

INFO: ATHENS, NEA/GTI

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
ANALYSIS & DISTRIBUTION BRANCH
REVIEWED BY [illegible] DATE 6 MAY 1982
DATE: Oct. 31, 1963
FBI or [illegible] DOS
[illegible] (P)
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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FROM : Amconsul THESSALONIKI

SUBJECT : National Elections in Northern Greece

REF :

With only three days remaining before the November 3 elections, the Consulate General's assessment of the electoral campaign and the election outlook for Northern Greece is as follows:

This campaign has undoubtedly evoked more interest than others in the recent past. Fundamental campaign issues here are the ERE theme of progress with stability versus the Center Union's appeal for a return to democracy and honest government. The ERE has stressed the need for continuity in government, political stability in order to insure economic stability and growth, and its record in improving the lot of all, especially Northern Greece's rural population. The CU has largely campaigned on the issues of favoritism and government violence, while Progressive leader MARKEZENIS, mixing humor with sharp analyses of domestic problems, has placed more emphasis on economic and social reform. EDA has dragged out its old workhorses of fascism, military expenditures, amnesty, etc. Foreign policy issues have figured less significantly in the campaign, but some play has been given to allegations that the U.S. Government has "dropped" CARAMANLIS, that the ERE has done little to adapt itself to the cold war detente, and that the Turks are hoping for another electoral victory by appeasement-minded Caramanlis.

Few incidents have marred the campaign here to date. The most serious one, in which two persons were slightly wounded, did not take

Declassified following: Oct. 31, 1973

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Drafted by: DAZacharysbck 10/30/63

Clearances:

Comments and Classification Approved by:

Robert S. Folsom, Consul General

place between the police and EDA, but between ERE and CU followers in Aksioupolis (Kilkis). Despite press allegations of police and military interference, everyone seems agreed that no pressure has been applied and that these elections will probably be the most honest in Greek history.

Though hampered by a lack of opinion polls and absence of good statistics, the Consulate General submits the following summary on the trends in the electoral campaign as of this date. At this point, the ERE appears to have lost ground significantly. There exists in Northern Greece a surprising consensus that the Center Union has made important inroads into ERE strength in the area. In the past few days, however, the CU tide has leveled off somewhat after last week's peak, but shows no signs of dropping sharply. Indicators of this trend are the following: A PAPANDREOU Tide has Developed. Both the man's image and his issues have caught fire here. The former is at least as important as the latter in Greek politics, and this time Caramanlis, on the other hand, has apparently failed to capture the imagination of the Northern Greek voter. Papandreou's unrelenting campaign, his appeal for a new political climate and his use of the LAMBRAKIS affair and aftermath have also stirred the electorate. Economic Factors. Specific groups, such as fruit growers, teachers, certain classes of laborers, etc., have voiced serious criticism of the Government's handling of their problems. The massive emigration from Northern Greece to Europe, necessitated by hard economic facts, has also embittered a number of those separated from members of their families. Furthermore, contrary to the belief that people don't want a change in good times, those who do feel that conditions are good also believe that economic stability will continue regardless of which nationalist party comes to power. The voter thus feels that stability and progress will continue in any case and he therefore feels he has nothing to lose by a change in government. Mechanical Factors. ERE will lose strength in this area due to the loss of one seat (now 81), the shift of four seats from rural to urban districts, heavy rural emigration to Europe in the past two years, counting of Army vote in the soldier's home district rather than place of assignment (in Kozani nome alone this will result in an estimated loss of about 5,000 votes), new electoral lists and the stringent measures taken to supervise voting procedures. "Time for a Change" Psychology. If the vote swings heavily away from ERE, as expected, an important reason will be the desire for a change after eight years of ERE governments. A number of supporters of both large parties have stressed their belief that many Greeks desire a change at this time. Other Factors are the belief by many voters (a factor which could strongly influence the outcome) that the Palace and probably the U.S. Government have dropped Caramanlis for various reasons; the reputation for mediocrity which ERE candidates have in this area and the feeling that this party has not campaigned hard enough; the belief that the Center Union may now be more than the sum of its parts; the absence of a tense cold-war situation such as existed before the 1961 elections; and the "make the vote count" psychology of many voters, who prefer to vote for a large party if they are anti-ERE rather than waste their vote on one of the two smaller parties.

The feeling regarding the outcome varies from ERE supporters who believe that the ERE will lose at least five votes, to CU supporters who feel that the ERE may lose as many as 17 of its 54 seats in Northern Greece. The Consulate General estimates that the ERE will lose 10-12 seats, and that this estimate could be on the conservative side. ERE stands a good chance of losing seats in every nome (and possibly two seats in three nomes) except Pieria, Emathia and Halkidiki, and in the first two of these nomes their chances for holding their own exist only because of the addition of one seat apiece. Despite Markezenis' devoted following, the Progressives are expected to do poorly in Northern Greece, picking up at the most one seat in Thessaloniki.

One of the most difficult factors to assess is the extent to which EDA may benefit from the trend away from the ERE. EDA, with its extremist slogans of fascism, reduction of military expenditures, legalization of KKE and its criticism of MAVROMIHALIS, appears very much out of touch with the mood of the electorate. Further, Papandreou's success in identifying himself as the leader of the campaign for democracy is appealing to "discontented" voters considerably more than the worn-out party slogans of EDA. The Consulate General feels that despite the absence of restrictions against EDA electoral activities, the swing toward the CU will keep EDA gains in Northern Greece down to three-four seats (in Thessaloniki A, Evros, Kilkis, Serres or Kozani), which with its present five would give EDA eight-nine seats in the new Parliament. The gendarmerie in this area feels that EDA will do better than this figure, getting probably 12 seats from Northern Greece.

In the past three elections Northern Greece has given the winning party a greater percentage than it received nationally. In the two elections preceding those, in 1951 and 1952, this area came within 5.3 and 1.9 percent of reaching the national average for the leading party, thus giving credence to the view that Northern Greece is a "bellwether" for the rest of the country. Concerning the national scene, a near-unanimous view held here is that neither party will win a working majority and that some kind of CU-ERE coalition will result, probably minus Caramanlis and with a Venizelos defection from the CU. Other possibilities, considered more remote, however, are an ERE-Progressive coalition or some kind of accommodation between the CU and EDA.

For the Consul General:

Dan A. Zachary

Dan A. Zachary
American Consul

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-2- 676, November 1, 7 PM from Athens

driver of an ERE candidate reportedly injuring him seriously. Papandreou expressed deepest regret re attack, questioned that culprits were CU followers.

Comment: CU followers greatly heartened by huge turnout at rally. CU enthusiasm playing heavy psychological role.

Papandreou and followers riding crest of wave because his blackmail tactics and "relentless struggle", culminating in removal of Pipinelis Government, have paid off. Buoyant and self-confident tone of his campaign has contrasted sharply with lack-luster and even occasionally petulant nature of Caramanlis campaign. Extent to which these psychological factors will translate into votes we will know Monday.

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